

Split Second Worksheet

1. Describe the *stasis* in the play: where, when, who, what, etc. in a paragraph.

The play is set during July 4th to July 6th in the present time (however, this play was written during the 1980s so could presume to be around that time) in New York City, Manhattan. The featured characters are Val Johnson, William H. Willis, Parker, Charlie, Alea Johnson, and Rusty Johnson. The premise of this play is that a respected black officer, Val Johnson, kills a white racist thief, William.

2. What is the *intrusion*?

Val Johnson, a black police officer, kills a white man in a “split second”

3. What is the *unique factor*?

This was set during July 4th, and Val is beginning to get fed up with his line of work, especially with the criminals.

4. What is the *dramatic question* that should be answered by the end of the play?

Will Willis receive justice? Will Val ever reveal the true details of the crime, or will he forever alter the details in order to quell his own conscious?

5. Provide an illustration of the *two kinds of exposition* that the play has in it.

Only Val knows the full details of what occurred the night he shot Willis. Everyone else knows that Val is a Vietnam veteran and they all think he was right to shoot Willis.

6. Identify the most *theatrical moment* in the play and of what importance it seems to be.

The most theatrical moment is actually the first scene in the play, when Val loses his cool and shoots Willis for racist remarks. This is important, because not only does it set the plot of the play, but it also shows how in a split of second, someone can completely change their life.

7. List some of the *themes* of the play.

Racism, Consequences of Actions, Societal Expectations, Job Obligations and Respect

8. What do the principal characters *want* and what are some *obstacles* that stand in the way of them getting what they want?

Val wants to be happy with his life and in control of it, but his desire to for his father's approval cripples his chances for satisfaction. He also has self-destructive tendencies that further decrease his probability for a happy life. Not only that, because of his race, he feels pressured to perform beyond everyone's expectations in the force yet is run down by the many criminals and the same ol' stereotypes that are placed on him regardless. He is frustrated by his thankless job and the racism that plagues him no matter where he goes.

9. Describe some possible *images* in the play and how does the *title* help us understand the play.

Cuffs are a possible image in the play, because Val feels cuffed in his life of a thankless job and Rusty. He doesn't help himself any by not telling the truth while standing on trial.

The title helps us understand the play, because it tells us how in a split of a second, everything can change. The moment when Val lost his cool and in that split second shot an unarmed man, everything in his life and conscious went topsy-turvy. The title tells us that life can go fast sometimes, and sometimes even split second decisions can alter reality forever.

10. Briefly define the *family relationships* that are examined in the play.

Val and Alea have a loving, but strained, relationship as he constantly lectures her and scolds her due to him being a cop and overprotective. Alea always stays by his side and tries to protect him from the burdens placed by his father.

Val and Rusty have a strained relationship in the sense that Rusty places too many expectations on his son, Val, which burdens him immensely. This is especially evident in the end when it is revealed to Rusty that Willis was not unarmed and that Val had lost his cool and just shot him point blank. Rusty yells at Val to own up to his mistake and to confess to his crime, while Val counters back with that Willis would be in jail anyways, that he deserved it from the racist remarks. This gives a clear window in how authoritative Rusty is towards Val.